'EVERYONE ELSE IS THEY': A NEW FRAMEWORK
FOR OPERATIONAL CULTURE

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I offer a theoretical approach to evaluating operational and strategic plans through the lens of culture, and combine theories to address the social and political logics at work in a society, as well as the logic of fantasy that overlays these structures. I also address how narratives and stories of peoplehood are used to shore up the political and fantasmatic logics, and to maintain power despite emerging contestation of the status quo. Finally, multiple theories regarding political language and political reality, semiotics and meaning-making, and the existential faith of a society are used to identify if and when these complicated stories of peoplehood and fantasmatic logics are at work. All of these combined will enable planners to identify areas for intervention, to evaluate the potential success or failure of a course of action, and to anticipate potential second- and third-order effects of planned lines of effort.

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ABSTRACT

'EVERYONE ELSE IS THEY': A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR OPERATIONAL
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ACRONYMS

FM	Field Manual
JIPOE	Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment
MISO	Military Information Support Operations
U.S.	United States

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CHAPTER 1

CULTURE MATTERS

> You better be damn sure, as sure as you can be, before you get into something, because once you're into it, there isn't any backing out, whether it's a no-fly zone, safe zone, protect these--whatever it is. Once you're in, you can't unwind it. You can't just say, well, it's not going as well as I thought it would go, so we're going to get out.
>
> — Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel
> Testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee, 17 April 2013

The American military and intelligence communities face complex situations presented by the United States (U.S.) government, often after other instruments of national power have failed, and are instructed to initiate some type of change and a desired political end-state. The situations in which these communities are required to intervene are complex, multi-faceted, and layered; frequently involve "hard targets" and "failing states" already in social, economic, and political chaos; and often operate with a timeline, imposed by the U.S. government or the international community, under which time-constrained decisions must be made. The military and intelligence communities do not have the option to foreswear action, and in being forced to react at the behest of civilian masters, must operate in unfamiliar and time-constrained environments.

The typical approach to culture, at least as envisioned within the military and intelligence community, posits a unique essence of culture that must be deeply understood in order to enable meaningful action within that society (Geertz 2009). The idea of the unknowable mysteries of cultural practices and taboos, and the motivations behind them, is often unintelligible to those devoted to action, and requiring the study of obscure or arcane scholarly texts will preclude most operational planners from delving

too deeply into the dark recesses of cultural theory. This failing, as it is very much a failing rather than simply a preference of non-cultural theoretical constructs, restricts the ability of the U.S. military and intelligence communities to plan successful operations. A more strategic understanding of cultural forces could present opportunities for intervention, in terms of kinetic military operations or clandestine intelligence efforts that could preclude the need for a long-term U.S. presence. The current understanding of operational culture is insufficient to aid military and intelligence planners and leaders in identifying the optimal courses of action when intervening in an external conflict.

The ideas of culture as codified in the Army Field Manual (FM) 3-24 and the Marine Corps' *Operational Culture for the Warfighter* are more suited to "tactical culture" for the "strategic corporal," and should be maintained to inform interpersonal relationships with the host nation military, government, and population, as well as coalition partners. But when the U.S. attempts to define terms like "good governance" and "legitimacy"–goals of the counterinsurgency strategy in FM 3-24–it should do so with a deeper understanding of the social forces at play in the affected society. Projecting American concepts onto another culture, to which those concepts might be unintelligible, is a recipe for wasted time, treasure, and lives–on all sides of the conflict.

The question of whether one should show the bottom of one's foot to an Arab, or whether the left hand is considered dirty, may be relevant to daily interactions with host nation counterparts, but would not have helped U.S. planners in predicting the second- and third-order effects of disbanding the Iraqi National Army after the fall of Saddam Hussein. Nor would knowledge of these facts, or applying them haphazardly to all Arabs, have helped design sustainable and supportable lines of effort in combating the

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insurgency and civil war that resulted from those initial decisions. These interpersonal-level cultural facts are equally irrelevant as the U.S. considers options for intervention in Syria.

Culture is a legitimate component of all aspects of planning for military intervention, at all levels of war. It is equally important when planning for clandestine and covert intelligence operations that rely on foreign agents. But just as the Army has developed different planning processes for tactical, operational, and strategic leaders and problem-sets, different concepts of culture should also be applied at each level of war. Though the idea of showing one's foot can have significant import at the tactical level, the cultural forces at work in determining the heroes and narratives of a society may be invisible at the tactical level but of vital importance at the strategic and operational levels.

The reason for the existence of the military is defense of the nation through intervention--often abrupt, sometimes violent, other times clandestine--and it behooves us--it is our "responsibility"--to consider the consequences and impact of our intervention. The military must also inform the Commander in Chief, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Congress of the likelihood of success of military intervention as well as its potential cost. The goal of the intelligence community is to inform strategic policymakers not only on conflict within a specific location, but the many factors outside of a failing state that will inform the degree to which the U.S. can or should intervene. The relationships and ties from Syria to Russia, for example, and the ties between the Syrian regime and Hezbollah, greatly complicate the options available to the U.S. for intervention in that ongoing conflict; any disruption of those relationships, or exploitation of them, could create negative second- and third-order effects not just in Syria, but in the

Middle East and potentially globally. All of the shared goals of the military and intelligence communities would benefit from evaluating the types of narratives, relationships, and challenges identified with this framework, not only for internal consideration but also for informing the rest of the U.S. government.

To that end, it is also our responsibility to discover those "strategic junctures where significant possibilities of change are under way" and identify intervention strategies that will move those possibilities in one direction or another (Connolly 2004, 344). A strategic juncture may occur at any level of war, and creates a fecund moment where decisions have far-reaching and often unanticipated consequences. A strategic juncture coalesced at the tactical level to trigger the Anbar Awakening in Iraq, but arose due to countless social, political, and cultural forces well above the tactical level that were not well understood by the U.S. at the time. That someone was able to capitalize on this strategic juncture to create positive movement toward American goals remains an impressive feat, and something that we would like to duplicate in other, equally complex situations. That we failed to create similar "awakenings" in other areas of Iraq speaks to the complexity of the environment and the people, but also to our inability to recognize and capitalize on strategic junctures.

Intervention should not be considered the ill-advised misadventures of a global power invading another country, but is a more sophisticated process composed of explanation, participation, and evaluation (Connolly 2004, 344). In order to intervene in a meaningful and responsible way, components of intervention must be evaluated and adapted. Social sciences, particularly in the area of political theory, have provided general mechanisms for explanation, however the foray into explanation of the

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operational environment and culture's role in it continues with this framework. The theories at work in this framework provide the means to identify or perhaps create the strategic junctures and forking moments when intervention has the greatest chance of success, and potentially to identify when a specific type of intervention, such as de-Ba'athification, could result in counterproductive outcomes.

This framework advocates concentrating not on the essence of culture or an intangible idea of being within a society, but on the observable, outward expressions of that essence. Concentrating not on the way culture is manifested in a specific society, but on the processes by which that culture and its social and political rules came to predominate is the goal of this framework, and the means of identifying what is operationally relevant to intelligence and military professionals as they seek to inform policymakers and put forward recommendations to the whole of the U.S. government. Focusing on the words and deeds of a culture, and not as much the content of those words but the relationships and connections of those words and deeds to the logics that create order in society, provides a way for military and intelligence planners to identify strategic junctures where we can make the most impact.

The military and intelligence communities have worked closely with Department of State, Department of Justice, and other offices and agencies from across the federal government throughout the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Introducing the concepts of culture outlined in this framework will posture the military and intelligence communities to interact with counterparts throughout the government in attempting to understand in a comprehensive way the areas in which we are attempting to intervene. This kind of analysis prepares military and intelligence leaders to engage with diplomats,

investigators, agricultural specialists, economists, and all the vital disciplines within the whole-of-government approach necessary to design an effective strategy of engagement where armed intervention might not be the optimal solution. By considering the many complex factors in this framework prior to "boots on the ground," the military and intelligence communities will be better postured to integrate the whole of government into proposed lines of effort, and make informed recommendations to policymakers and the President regarding these strategies prior to actual intervention. Engaging the academy and a wide range of scholars creates the opportunity for inter-organizational dialogue as well, and fosters the types of questions that arise from lifelong inquiry into "puzzles" that will inform military planning in a meaningful way.

If the other instruments of national power should fall short and the obligation to act is pressed upon the military, we may not have the time or resources to identify the strategic juncture of our choosing. This framework also enables greater depth of understanding in evaluating the courses of action and lines of effort recommended to senior military and political leadership. The political end-state of an intervention, often dictated by political calculations or international scrutiny, may be as vague as "democracy" and carry with it the burden of Western liberal democratic traditions. Achieving this end-state may be impossible depending on where it is being applied, that culture's concepts of authority and legitimacy, and the strength of those stories of peoplehood. This framework creates a mechanism by which planners can articulate the potential for relative success or failure of a proposed end-state, whether that is the political end-state defined by the President or the military end-state defined by a

commander on the ground in the conflict, using theories that break down the cultural elements relevant to the operational planning process.

Determining the plausibility of a political or military end-state, course of action, or line of operation in light of the host nation culture prior to implementing that action could save significant treasure and lives for the U.S. as well as coalition and host nation forces. Rather than simply filling in charts for a briefing, honest reflection on the plausibility of fostering democratic practices in Iraq, for example, could have spared a great deal of wasted effort.

In cases where conflict is ongoing, and the initiation of conflict is outside the control of the U.S., the theories collected in this framework provide insight into the strategic calculus of the various actors within the conflict. The framework provides the means to identify areas of contestation and points of resistance against the social and political logics ordering society, and particularly how those different types of resistance resist each other. While the social logic tells us how things are, the political logic provides the counter-narratives that challenge the dominant narrative and is itself covered over by a logic of fantasy that defines why society "must" be ordered the way it is. In every society, there are individuals and groups who exist on the fringes and challenge the status quo, who believe they are misrepresented or not represented at all, in the dominant narratives and national identity put forth by the majority. Those groups, occupying the areas of contestation and voicing the counter-narratives to challenge the social logic in society, present opportunities for U.S. agencies seeking to intervene--whether that intervention is diplomatic, military, clandestine, economic, informational, or some other means.

When considering the conflict in Syria, in which numerous rebel groups act in concert periodically against the regime of Bashar al-Assad, the theories within this framework can be used to evaluate the shifting alliances, politics, and narratives of these groups. By evaluating these groups in a meaningful way, based not on their professed support for democracy but on the stories they put forward to their constituents and the grievances they bring against the regime, the U.S. may be able to support groups that are most likely to bring positive change to Syrian society, rather than those who may create further chaos and destroy the state apparatus completely.

The Secretary of Defense's comment in the epigraph, provided during testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, highlights the necessity of a framework as described in this paper. The unintended consequences of U.S. intervention in any conflict, not just in Syria or a volatile region like the Middle East, can have far-reaching and disastrous effects if not planned for or anticipated. The many forces at work in the political logic illustrate how difficult it is for any institution to predict cause-and-effect, particularly when intervention in a complex system can have myriad fecund interactions and resonance that may not be apparent at the time of intervention. The fact that the Department of Defense and the Intelligence Community must consider these second- and third-order effects is not contested. I offer this framework to support efforts to understand and articulate the unintended consequences of American interventions overseas.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

> We have an obligation and responsibility to think through the consequences of any direct U.S. military action in Syria. Military intervention at this point could hinder humanitarian relief operations. It could embroil the United States in a significant, lengthy, and uncertain military commitment. Unilateral military action could strain other key international partnerships, as no international or regional consensus on supporting armed intervention now exists. And finally, a military intervention could have the unintended consequence of bringing the United States into a broader regional conflict or a proxy war.
>
> — Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel
> Statement to the Senate Armed Services Committee, 17 April 2013

The relationship between culture and warfare, particularly counterinsurgency and irregular war, has been studied from a social science perspective but less so from a strictly military stance. The "revolutionary" inclusion of culture in official doctrine, in FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, sparked a wider debate about the propriety of military appropriation of social science concepts and theories to facilitate intervention and armed conflict. Within the social sciences, the role of culture in conflict initiation and termination has been examined and debated extensively. At issue in this paper is whether the type of culture addressed in FM 3-24 and *Operational Culture for the Warfighter* is useful for military planners and leaders. I focus on the FM and Marine Corps booklet as primary sources of operational culture as these are both used in the Common Core Curriculum at the Command and General Staff Officer's Course at Ft. Leavenworth, as well as the Army's Red Team course through the University of Foreign Military and Cultural Studies. Both FM 3-24 and *Operational Culture for the Warfighter* are the foundation of the Army's current discussion about operational culture, and are also

responsible for stirring much of the current controversy in the literature about the "weaponization" of culture.

FM 3-24 defines culture as "a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that members of a society use to cope with their world and with one another," and that culture is learned, shared, patterned, changeable, arbitrary, internalized, and habitual (U.S. Department of the Army 2007, 3-6). *Operational Culture*'s definition is worded differently, however captures the same basic tenets: the shared world view and social structures of a group of people that influence a person's and a group's actions and choices (Barak and Holmes-Eber 2008, 36).

Operational Culture (hereafter OC) refines a specific definition for operational culture to "the dimensions influencing operationally-relevant behavior, conduct, and attitudes," which is specific to a particular operation's goals (Barak and Holmes-Eber 2008, 44). The idea is to limit the amount of information to be processed by soldiers and Marines engaged in a conflict, however OC and FM 3-24 are silent as to how leaders, planners, and the average military professional can isolate the signal from the cultural noise--and how to extract aspects of social and cultural reality from a society without accounting for ambiguity, perverse incentives, and biases. OC, in advocating that operational culture is limited to what an individual Marine may find relevant to the situation "as he understands it," assumes that a Marine or soldier will be able to identify the specific threads in the fabric of a culture that are relevant to an operation, or even that the threads can be discerned. Focusing on one thread of culture, whatever initially appears to be the most relevant to the operation, ignores chains of causality and the semiotics that exists around visual social artifacts.

FM 3-24 advocates analyzing culture and its relevance to operations according to six sociocultural factors: society; social structure; culture; language; power and authority; interests (U.S. Department of the Army 2007, 3-4). The field manual offers a nod to connections between the six factors, but proceeds to examine the six dimensions as if they were discrete fields. OC's approach to analyzing culture is more basic than FM 3-24, utilizing five dimensions: environment; economy; social structure; political structure; and belief systems (Barak and Holmes-Eber 2008, 51). The Marine Corps manual periodically acknowledges the causal role culture may have on creating or changing these dimensions, but its attention to interactions and systems of meaning among the different dimensions tend to ignore reciprocal relationships between the dimensions and causality unrelated to culture.

Worth mentioning is the odd silence in FM 3-24 on religion and the role of religion in the majority of other countries in the world. Though accounting for the legitimacy that often accrues around charismatic religious figures in leadership positions, FM 3-24 offers little on the way religion can and will shape culture, and culture will shape religious expression, nor the ways that religious symbols, rituals, and beliefs can be exploited during the planning and execution of operations. Ignoring this component of social life sets the warfighter up for missteps and misunderstandings.

Critiques of FM 3-24 from the social sciences, particularly anthropology, span a wide range of issues and opinions: from articulate conversations about the theoretical and academic failings of the manual (Albro 2010b) to vehement condemnation of the idea of military anthropology (Keenan 2010). The definitions and concepts of culture expressed in FM 3-24 are frequently identified as incomplete, static, and outdated in comparison to

recent anthropological research (Isaac et al. 2008; Vizzard and Capron 2010; Gonzalez 2007a; Hill 2009; Nachbar 2012; Price 2007).

In defense of those definitions, scholars have argued that FM 3-24 is not intended as an academic document but as doctrine, and thus must be intelligible to most members of the U.S. military. The definition of culture included, they argue, is sufficient to allow users of the field manual to apply the relevant theories and concepts in order to achieve the goals of counterinsurgency (McFate 2007; Petraeus 2006). In these views, awareness of culture serves a purpose, though not an academic one as envisioned by Gonzalez (2007a) and Albro (2010b). Culture is further addressed in FM 3-24.2, *Tactics in Counterinsurgency*, to expand culture doctrine to all level of war (Ferriter 2010).

There is also a question of whether it is ethical for the military to "weaponize" anthropological and culture research. The idea of exporting social science theory to the defense establishment to make operations (and by extension, killing) more efficient and effective is challenged as a violation of the professional ethics of anthropology. Unsurprisingly, there is resentment and concern over ethnographic studies being used to potentially oppress the subjects of study by the U.S. military during an intervention or occupation (Gonzalez 2007b; Albro 2010a; Keenan 2010).

Though study of military culture by anthropologists is considered ethnographic research like any other (Gusterson 2007), efforts by the military to use anthropological research elicit deep-seated distrust. The conflict over whether published research can be "misappropriated" is difficult to reconcile; the information may be released for the education of the greater public, but once scholars release their work, they lose control over who can read and interpret that information. Military anthropology is often viewed

as concealment for nefarious intelligence-gathering activities (Gonzalez 2008), or otherwise feared as efforts by the government to militarize interactions with its own people (Hill 2009).

In contrast to these criticisms, particularly the idea of misappropriation of knowledge, is the argument that addressing cultural factors in operational planning could potentially alleviate suffering or save lives among target populations (McFate and Fondacaro 2008; McFate 2005a; McFate 2007). Anthropology and the military have an extensive shared history, as anthropology was long considered the "handmaid of empire" (McFate 2005b; Sluka 2010), though debate continues as to how that history should be interpreted (Price 2002).

As difficult as the discussion is around whether the military should appropriate anthropological research, there is equal tension around the idea of anthropologists working or cooperating with the military. A primary concern is the potential for host nation security services to view all anthropologists as agents of a foreign state, regardless of whether those anthropologists are actually employed on behalf of a government or military (Spencer 2010; Keenan 2010; Albro 2010b). Whether the armed intervention is considered "just" within the just war paradigm could be utilized to justify or delimit anthropological support for military operations, though the preponderance of anthropologists do not appear to support even those parameters (Lucas 2008).

The counter to these concerns is that including social scientists in military calculations can prevent conflict, avert misunderstandings and trauma, and minimize collateral damage (McFate 2005a; McFate 2005b). Wax (2003) makes an eloquent argument, based on the nature of the global enemy and its stance against free speech and

liberal education, anthropologists should support efforts to defeat extremist terrorist movements like al Qaeda.

Within the U.S. military, the importance of cultural awareness and knowledge in the conduct of irregular war was acknowledged well before FM 3-24's release (Petraeus 2006; Renzi 2006; Scales 2004). Even in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. military used cultural knowledge prior to the publication of FM 3-24, though the understanding and sensitivity to culture differed between conventional forces in the Army, and more unconventional approaches from the Special Forces and the Marine Corps (Brown 2008; Petraeus 2006).

The American transition from conventional warfare to a counterinsurgency mindset required an acknowledgment of the role that culture and disparate social forces played in the Iraqi and Afghan civil wars (Brown 2008; Cohen et al. 2006; Kilcullen 2006; Sepp 2007). During the shift to counterinsurgency as defined in FM 3-24, cultural concepts were misapplied and in some instances, a complete lack of cultural understanding created friction, and destroyed opportunities, for American forces seeking to stabilize Iraq and Afghanistan (Rosen 2011; McFate 2005b).

In considering operational culture, the recent experience of the U.S. in Iraq and Afghanistan must also be addressed, particularly as a common critique of the manual is that it was written specifically for those conflicts (Vizzard and Capron 2010). The interpretation of counterinsurgency doctrine, and the application of culture to planning counterinsurgency operations, as documented in FM 3-24 developed largely from the U.S. experiences and lessons learned in Iraq and Afghanistan (Petraeus 2006; Kaplan 2013), though the theory behind these lessons is derived from more traditional wars of

national liberation (Isaac et al. 2008). Whether this doctrine, developed from fighting Maoist insurgencies and applied based on trial-and-error in Iraq and Afghanistan, can be implemented in other conflicts, in other cultures, remains to be seen (Hoffman 2007; Lopez 2007).

An underlying assumption throughout FM 3-24 is an implicit emphasis on achieving American standards of authority, legitimacy, and good governance (Isaac et al. 2008; Myerson 2009; Nachbar 2012), while not accounting for traditional forms of leadership and authority that could facilitate more effective operational planning. The same problem exists regarding how to gain cooperation and the compliance of the population--the "hearts and minds"--when the requirements of FM 3-24 do not conform to culturally acceptable concepts of authority and legitimacy (Bauer 2009; Fitzsimmons 2008; McFate and Jackson 2006). The expectation that Western ideals of good governance, security, and liberal democracy would take root as desired end-states in Iraq and Afghanistan locked the U.S. into courses of action that may not have been either plausible or desirable, from the viewpoint of the host nation populations.

Diverse variables subsumed under the culture rubric in FM 3-24, such as ethnicity, narrative, belief, and social networks, play roles in conflict initiation and termination, particularly in insurgency and civil war (Bernstein 2005; Isaac et al. 2008; Loseke 2007; McNeil 2010; Renzi 2006; Whitmeyer 2002). The question of narrative is vital to understanding and influencing a group of people, as will be discussed in Chapter Four, however FM 3-24's passing mention of the concept of narratives does not provide insight into how to construct a narrative or how to deconstruct the American narrative to understand its effect on adversaries and allies (Betz 2008; Casebeer and Russell 2005;

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Vlahos 2006; Vlahos 2007). Failing to address the diverse ways these variables interact and influence the onset, progression, and termination of conflict would be a disservice to military planners designing operations that may put Americans in harm's way. And yet FM 3-24 fails to account for these processes.

FM 3-24's guidance for relating to the host nation security forces appears derived more from experience in Iraq and Afghanistan (Vizzard and Capron 2010), rather than real social science theory about conflicts, civil wars, and insurgencies (Christia 2012), and thus the counterinsurgency manual is relevant to these conflicts but may not be relevant if exported elsewhere. The challenges of effective counterinsurgency without accounting for culture are many (Zambernardi 2010), not least of which is the role of the host nation security forces. Byman (2006) argues that we do not adequately account for different cultural variables or perverse incentives that might prevent the host nation from truly implementing U.S. counterinsurgency initiatives. These difficulties are compounded when we consider the degree to which U.S. military and security processes are being contracted out to foreign private companies and even host nation contractors (Spearin 2007), and the potentially destructive interactions between these organizations, the population, and American end-states.

The average Soldier, Marine, and intelligence officer needs to recognize and understand many of the issues raised in both FM 3-24 and OC. The approaches put forth, however, are insufficient to aid in the informed planning and execution of war. The ideas of culture presented in FM 3-24 and OC, as well as many of the points of contention among the scholars discussed above, largely describe "tactical culture" rather than the application of culture at the operational and strategic levels of war.

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As the U.S. continues to be engaged in the far corners of the world, we cannot rely on laminated "smart cards" that inform us not to show the bottoms of our feet to the host population when we attempt to evaluate the desired end-states and outcomes of intervention. Whether a country's definition of good governance follows the lines of effort described in FM 3-24, or the benchmarks for success that burden American operations, should be assessed prior to the initiation of conflict, rather than during Phase IV and the "we broke it, we bought it" reconstruction.

The cultural understanding necessary to foresee the type of catastrophe that occurred in Iraq requires extensive consideration of complex social science theory and true openness to realities other than our liberal democratic traditions. The "tactical culture" that governs interpersonal interaction does not provide any tools for decision-makers to consider alternate approaches and end-states not derived from the American world-view. To rectify this, I offer the following proposals for a framework of operational culture not only for the warfighter, but for intelligence analysts and planners, diplomats, and all other officers of the U.S. government.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

> Military intervention is always an option. It should be an option, but an option of last resort.
>
> — Secretary Chuck Hagel
> Statement on Syria before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 17 April 2013

This paper proposes to address the "problems" of the military and intelligence community in light of theories developed to address the "puzzles" of academia (Mosser 2010; Yingling 2010). The challenge of responding to a problem–an emergent situation that one "must" respond to–that is likely better addressed as a puzzle is reflected in American interventions overseas. This is further complicated by the intensity of military intervention, when it occurs, and the potential unforeseen second- and third-order effects that may arise. Both the military and intelligence communities must inform and advise the President and Congress on real problems that exist in the world and can have far-reaching impact on the U.S. and her allies.

The military and intelligence communities' need to address problems, rather than abstract puzzles without the constraints of time and politics, drives the current formulation of culture as checklist and even a subset of steps in the military decision-making process. This mechanical concept of culture, formulated in acronyms and matrices during Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment (JIPOE), limits the insight that culture could provide to the development and evaluation of lines of operation, lines of effort, and end-states. A checklist approach to culture suits a traditional military approach to a problem: it presents steps to conduct and things to avoid, but does not create depth of understanding. In contrast, the puzzle approach of

academics is unconstrained by time and fueled by a deep personal interest in the topic; this encourages the specialization that creates a holistic assessment of emerging trends and behaviors within defining what, if anything, is in need of change. Military and intelligence professionals seldom have the luxury of this depth of specialization in one part of the world, but are called upon to work globally. Taking the theories about culture and society developed with the benefit of the academic "puzzle" approach and grafting them into the processes defined by the U.S. military and intelligence communities for problem solving, we can define a framework of value for the whole-of-government approach favored in recent history.

I will introduce and unpack three analytical tools for breaking apart the operational environment with respect to culture, and weave these theories together in order to identify those strategic junctures where intervention is possible or advisable. These three components combine into a framework that is flexible enough to evaluate the proposed end-states of an intervention or to develop those end-states based on assessments within the framework. To this point, a means of evaluating the lines of effort and decision-making of senior leaders in the military and intelligence communities has not been developed in relation to counterinsurgency and other forms of conflict.

This paper does not seek to contribute to the conversation as to the role of ethnicity and religion in conflict initiation or termination. The social sciences have debated the roles of these factors in conflict in a robust literature spanning multiple disciplines, though all the findings available to date remain contestable in light of other proposed causal mechanisms. What is of interest to us is the degree to which these identities and cultural constructs apply under U.S. government approaches, specifically

military and intelligence operations. I focus not on culture writ large, but the role culture can and should play in U.S. military operations. This framework has utility in the planning and execution of military operations in unfamiliar environments, particularly those with complex, multiethnic societies.

This paper is also not intended to comment on the decision-making and planning of actors indigenous to the conflict under examination, as the complexities of alliance formation and political judgments within insurgencies and civil wars are addressed in detail elsewhere in the literature. The work here is not intended to respond to a specific case study or evaluate an historical event, however the applicability of this framework to the ongoing conflict in Syria is readily apparent, and thus some examples have been drawn from Syria to illustrate important points in the theory.

Finally, it is not my intention to comment on the ethics of utilizing social science theories to facilitate and refine military and intelligence operations. I would offer the argument that appreciating the forces at work within a society, prior to intervention, could prevent many of the missteps for which the U.S. is excoriated in Afghanistan and Iraq. We are able to identify the forking moments in history with the benefit of hindsight, in which we might have chosen a different course of action, however unless we attempt to create a meaningful framework for anticipating or perhaps creating those moments, we will always be doomed to react to, rather than shape, our operational environment.

With these limitations in mind, my framework evaluates first the logics that arise in a society on social, political, and fantasmatic levels. This macro assessment of a society's culture provides insight into how and when contestation develops or is subsumed under other logics, and is perhaps the most important component of this

framework, as it identifies and defines the points where intervention is possible. The social logic demonstrates life as it appears in a society, while the political logic articulates the points of contestation and resistance that challenge the dominant social logic. Fantasmatic logic covers over the contingency that naturally occurs within society, in order to explain why the dominant social logic is the only logic that can work.

The second major component of the framework involves an assessment of the various types of narratives that support and sustain these logics, by creating justifications for the social and political orders that overlay a society. Without shared stories of peoplehood to unite them, disparate groups would be unlikely to cooperate and the viability of many post-Cold War states would come into question. Elites create these shared stories of a glorious past, political power, and economic strength in order to build coalitions to seize and maintain political power to further their own ends, as well as those of their constituents.

The final element of this framework is built upon several smaller blocks or theories, related to the semiotics and language used in forming these narratives. Without understanding and addressing the ways in which political language gains meaning, how symbols are manipulated to ensure compliance, and the ways language affects constituents based on material and other circumstances, it may be impossible to accurately identify the viability of the narratives developed. In turn, the misidentification of the purpose of these narratives can lead to the misunderstanding of the logics at work in a society, and finally to an inaccurate assessment of the viability of end-states and lines of effort.

This framework is intended to fill a gap between the puzzles of academia and the problems of the military and intelligence communities. I seek to provide a means of evaluating the solutions proposed during operational planning, and allow the utilization of select academic theories to refine and shape these solutions during the planning stage, prior to intervention. By considering the potential unintended consequences of intervention before those actions have begun to change the operational environment, we potentially preserve the initiative and create opportunities for meaningful, successful intervention.

CHAPTER 4

NEW OPERATIONAL CULTURE

> So before we take action, we have to be prepared for what comes next. The use of force, especially in circumstances where ethnic and religious factors dominate, is unlikely to produce predictable outcomes. Now to be clear, this is not a reason to avoid intervention and conflict. But rather to emphasize that unintended consequences are the rule with military interventions of this sort.
> — General Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs
> Testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee, 13 April 2013

> although the importance of cultural awareness can never be overestimated, no knowledge of history and culture alone, regardless of how deep or profound, will get us to understand why warring actors fight with or against one another.
> — Fotini Christia, *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars* (3)

The literature provides an interesting snapshot of recent arguments about including culture in operational planning in the military and intelligence community, however does not address the root problem of current efforts to do so. The more complex concepts of culture put forward, even by anthropologists like Gonzalez (2008) and Albro (2010a), are not useful for military planners or leaders. The theories that treat culture as a black box or a "puzzle" that is impossible to understand without long-term ethnographic research and study only create the perception among the military and intelligence communities that we can relegate culture to a checklist, because we can never sufficiently understand it to use it effectively. Debating the definition of culture in FM 3-24, as well as the ethics of anthropological support for military intervention, draws focus from the more relevant question: are the concepts of culture in FM 3-24 useful in operational planning? The answer, unfortunately, is that they are not.

To that end, I propose a framework that focuses not on the physical

manifestations of a culture but the underlying logics and narratives that provide meaning

in a society, as well as the building blocks used to establish and maintain these logics. A

common complaint from the average Soldier or Marine is that culture, as described by

academics, can be unknown and unknowable, and thus useless when attempting to

integrate it into operations (Barak and Holmes-Eber 2008).

The U.S. military and intelligence communities are adept at collecting

information and facts, correlating them, and drawing conclusions based on what is

available.[1] But in complex situations--wicked problems, perhaps--simply accruing facts,

arranging them into a series of pamphlets, and expecting this knowledge to be useful, is

disastrous. We are often hamstrung by the need to categorize and then apply those facts,

without truly appreciating the understanding necessary to anticipate and articulate

problematic features in the operational environment. One of the concerns with FM 3-24's

concept of culture is that it compiles a long list of litter--artifacts and pieces of

information that may form part of the skeleton of a society--without making the

necessary connections between these facts to give them meaning, and without making the

relationship between these facts and our desired end-state apparent.

It is only understanding that makes knowledge meaningful; connections and

relationships within the world are important. The world is composed of relations and

events not of our choosing (Zerilli 2005) and we cannot control the emergence of new

ideas, movements, and structures. Since we cannot control these things, we must try to

understand in order to influence and persuade. Zerilli (2005) emphasizes the need for an

"enlarged mentality," that supports imaginatively thinking from multiple (unfamiliar)

standpoints. This use of imaginative thinking, not just in political discourse but in any endeavor, opens the world and creates the potential for changing perspectives and reinterpreting the facts and ideas we already know. We as military and national security professionals may take certain facts for granted as "known knowns" but unless we utilize an enlarged mentality to examine not only our interpretation, but that of many others, we will likely be handicapped in our ability to understand the adversary and our allies.

A problematic contention of FM 3-24 and OC is that some parts of culture will be operationally relevant, while the irrelevant aspects can be identified, separated, and safely put aside. My proposed framework challenges the notion that culture can be deconstructed and separated into items that will affect military intervention and things that will not. It is difficult to conceive of how to separate threads from an ethically constitutive narrative, or view components of semiotics, without also considering the many social forces that influence those ideas.
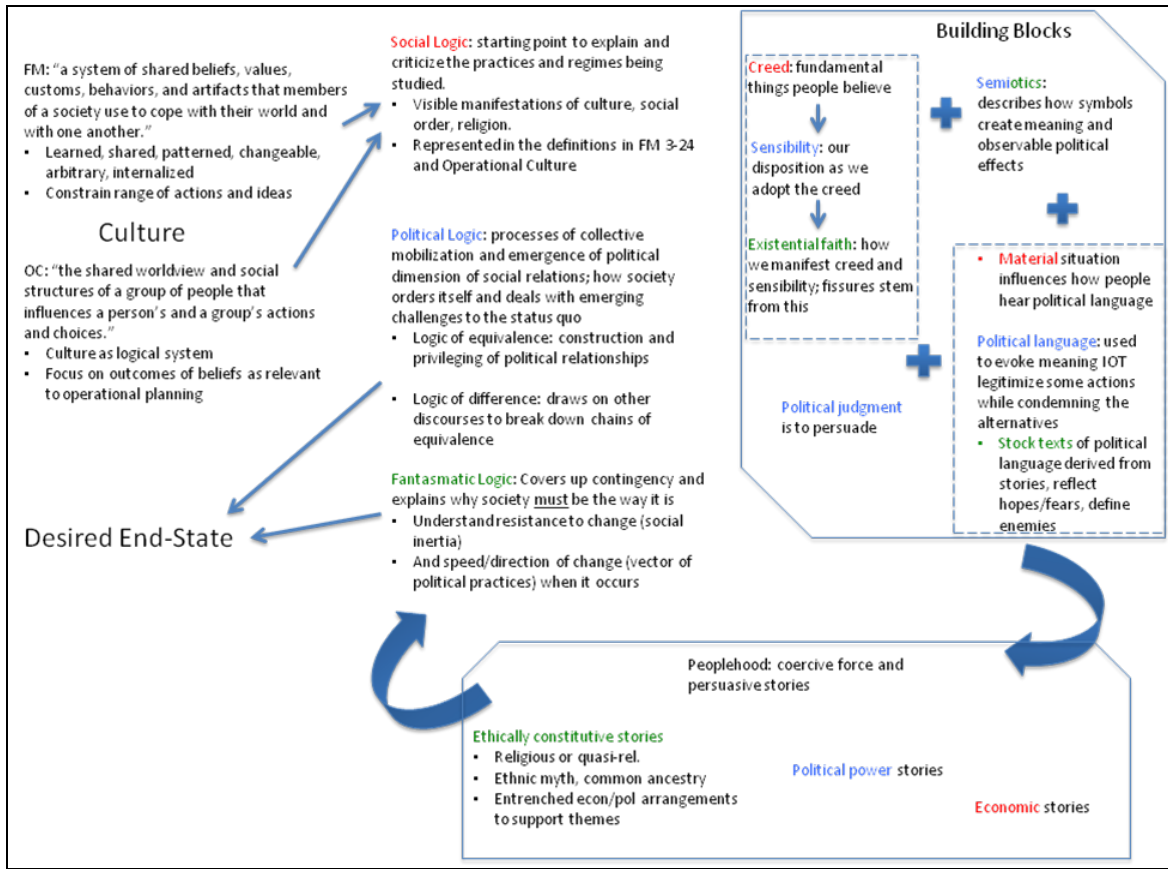
Figure 1.   Theoretical Framework for Operational Culture

Source: Created by author.

Logics of Society, Politics, and Fantasy

The foundation of this framework is the differentiation between multiple logics at work in a society. These logics operate at different levels and play important roles in ordering society, maintaining that order, and eventually changing that order. The social logic, which articulates what can be observed about a culture, is constructed by the observer, and is used to explain the practices at hand (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 139). The constructs proposed in FM 3-24 and OC address mainly the social logic of a society,

and remain concerned with describing the "other" and foreign practices. This logic is useful for an observer or traveler, or a tactical soldier interesting in maintaining a viable relationship with local counterparts, but less so as a means of planning intervention.

Most important for operational culture is the political logic, which explains how and where points of contestation develop within a society, and what conflict arises from differing political views. The political logic shows us where consensus is achieved in a society, as well as where dissent arises and resists the existing logic. The components of the political logic--logics of equivalence and difference--create a vocabulary for understanding the dynamic processes through which political frontiers are "constructed, stabilized, strengthened, or weakened" (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 144). The logic of equivalence attempts to construct relations from antagonistic groups, and the logic of difference attempts to break these down. The way that the logic of equivalence creates stability and predominates the logic of difference is particularly relevant to our framework, as it reveals historic processes through which stability is achieved in a given society.

The ways in which equivalence and difference, through contestation and challenge, give rise to institutions provides us a means to design and implement logical lines of effort in support of the end-state. Good governance, security, and stability are all desired end-states articulated in FM 3-24, though the suggested paths to achieve these goals are constrained by American concepts of political legitimacy. By considering the logics of equivalence and difference unique to the society in question, we can arrive at meaningful end-states and lines of effort to reach those goals. Areas of contestation and fissures in the established political order also provide opportunities for intervention,

particularly if a given regime is unstable or approaching collapse. Addressing these areas of contestation, the U.S. can advocate for a socially-relevant and culturally-acceptable form of political logic to replace that which came before, and potentially is more palatable to the U.S. and international community.

If we acknowledge points of contestation within a political logic of a society, the question arises as to how those political institutions survive despite emergent challenges to the status quo. The answer is the third level of logic, the logic of fantasy. Fantasmatic logic is an idea designed to paper over the fissures in society that result from the logic of difference and the competitive, exclusionary process of political life. The fantasmatic logic tells a story to the people, particularly the disenfranchised, as to why things must be the way they are. This fantasy sublimates dissent and hides the social emergence that could lead to change, and reinforces the political logic as the only solution by preemptively absorbing challenges and alternate political logics.

The fantasmatic logic also provides a means to understand the resistance to change in social practices (the "inertia" of social practices), as well as the speed and direction of change when it occurs (the "vector" of political practices) (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 145). The political logics discussed above serve to construct social antagonisms and defend or challenge the existing social relations; the fantasmatic logic, in comparison, is intended to prevent the emergence of the political dimension, thus giving (or undermining) direction and energy to political practices (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 147).

What, then, does fantasmatic logic look like in practice? Glynos and Howarth (2007) argue that one means of identifying a fantasmatic object is to assess the degree to

which that object is resistant to public official disclosure. The less able the political logic is to address the suspected fantasmatic object, the more likely that logics of fantasy are at work. An illustrative example is the fantasy that supported and maintained the regime of Hafiz al-Assad in Syria (Wedeen 1998; Wedeen 2002). Irrationality, at least as a spectator would identify it, at one level creates and reinforces irrationality throughout (Connolly 1979). The Assad regime required adherence to a cult of personality around the Syrian president, calling for elaborate displays of support for the regime and ever-present photographs and representations of Assad, that the entire population understood to be absurd and entirely inauthentic. And yet the ability of the regime to enforce compliance, despite the acknowledgement of disbelief, further shored up Assad's dominance and prevented the emergence of real challenges to the regime (Wedeen 2002).

The result of this enforced fantasy for such duration was the abrupt (and violent) expression of all those points of contestation in the political logic that remained stifled throughout the regimes of both Assad the father and Assad the son. The current conflict could be understood in terms of the logic of difference, as the chains of equivalence that existed under the regime of Hafiz al-Assad have been rendered useless and society struggles to reach a point whereby a shared, generally acceptable political logic is re-established.

At the same time, Bashar al-Assad fights to maintain his fantasmatic logic, based upon his father's legacy, and re-impose an autocratic political logic onto the population. Only time will tell what will result, and what new types of fantasy will be necessary to maintain order in Syria. Under the previous regimes, Syrian citizens did not have to believe in the cult of personality around the Assad family, or buy in to the rhetoric

surrounding these figureheads; however all were required to act as if they did (Wedeen 1998; Wedeen 2002). It is difficult to conceptualize such a charade being reinstated after two years of civil war.

Thus, the social logic and observable "otherness" of a foreign society can be understood as "tactical culture" but can just as easily be a fantasmatic logic designed to conceal political and social resistance within that society. If U.S. military and intelligence professionals are not able to identify that a fantasmatic logic is at work, the fissures in society that present opportunities for intervention may not be identified or acknowledged. Though the political logic may be of the most utility at the operational and strategic levels in evaluating the plausibility of our desired end-state, we must be able to identify and then see through any fantasmatic logics at work in that society.

Identifying the social logic at work in a country is generally the easiest process, and unfortunately the U.S. efforts at understanding another culture at work tend to stop with the social logic as described here. In order to conduct military and intelligence operations effectively, we must instead address the presence or absence of both political and fantasmatic logics. It is only through changing these logics, or establishing our own to replace the existing logics, that we can hope to make meaningful change in the manner described in FM 3-24.

Narratives and Peoplehood

It is insufficient to simply tell planners and leaders to identify the political and fantasmatic logics prior to intervening, as doing so can be a challenge. The issue of how a society arrives at an acceptable political logic, or one that requires hearty fantasmatic logic, is relevant to planners dealing with societies in conflict. To that end, this

framework further addresses the creation and maintenance of these logics through the use of stories of peoplehood, people-building, and narrative construction. The story of peoplehood is a narrative designed to provide a sense of community and a shared interest that can be used to mobilize all or part of a population. While the U.S. has engaged in institution- and nation-building in Iraq and Afghanistan, little attention has been paid to the necessity of creating a sense of peoplehood within these countries.

The American goal of creating good governance in Iraq, in the vein of a representative democracy, did not give sufficient consideration to the stories needed to establish the credibility of that governance and to build buy-in from the local constituency. We cannot lift the American traditions of liberal democracy, based on hundreds of years of Western political thought and born of the unique historical processes in the U.S., and simply present it wholesale to the Iraqi people and expect that it should take root. Rather, we must understand the stories of peoplehood that unite and divide the people of a given society, such as Iraq, and understand how these narratives can create, or undermine, good governance as the people understand it.

Both political and fantasmatic logics are constructed and implemented by would-be and current leaders in a society, particularly those with political and power aspirations. This idea of peoplehood as constructed, and therefore changeable, is important to our understanding of real strategic and operational culture, in that it creates opportunity for intervention as it complicates the operational environment immensely.

Smith (2003) discusses two assumptions about political peoplehood which are relevant to our attempts to understand the political and fantasmatic logics, and how they can aid in operational planning: first, that no political people is primordial, and all are

derived from pre-existing forms of peoplehood; and second, that asymmetric and constrained relationships between leaders and constituents create the sense of peoplehood (Smith 2003, 32). Aspiring leaders must work with groups, and individuals, with established senses of identity based in other memberships and interests, all of which will influence what narratives and stories these individuals and groups find compelling.

Creating this shared identity is vital to motivating a coalition large enough to acquire political power and control, and thus establish the political logic desired by the would-be leader. The existing identities in society may already be in conflict within the target group, or may be rank-ordered in a manner that is not conducive to the change required by our desired end-state. It is possible to adapt these identities, but only through the thoughtful creation of other identities.

Stories of peoplehood are also utilized to construct and maintain institutions, as these narratives define who is a member of the group and who is not, and can be used to express the identities, values, and interests of the group in an official way (Smith 2003, 49). As such, narratives can arise from, and reinforce, the political institutions that order a society. The narratives may be apparent at the level of social logic, but are insidious in the political logic and fantasmatic logic. Indeed, the narrative is a vital part of maintaining the fantasy of why a society must operate as the political in-group wants it to operate, as narratives define enemies and threats that justify papering over legitimate contestation in society.

The politics behind constructing these narratives are always, to some degree, exclusionary, as accepting one strong sense of identity automatically means rejecting others (Smith 2003, 56). The sense of exclusion creates an out-group or an "other" that

shores up the identity of the inclusive group. In order for this contested political identity to persist over time, however, it must inspire senses of trust and worth within those adopting the outlook, and may require blending distinctive stories into a narrative acceptable to a larger coalition of groups (Smith 2003, 58). Smith identifies three types of stories that help to accomplish these goals; the three stories are combined in different ways and to different degrees, depending on the goals of the leadership and the interests of the constituency, but include: economic stories; political power stories; and ethically constitutive stories (2003, 59-60).

The economic story may closely correlate with the social logic, in that it is rather easily observed and understood for the outside observer: struggles over resources, the role of perceived economic deprivation relative to other groups in the population, and the classic "greed versus grievance" concepts of conflict present means of understanding how economic status motivates a group to support a leader who advocates on their behalf. These economic stories promote trust by arguing it is in the interests of a leader or specific group to advance each member's economic well-being, while offering a sense of worth and motivation through the potential for increased wealth (Smith 2003, 60). The economic story as a motivation is relatively easily understood, as is the second story proposed by Smith, the political power story.

The political power story is associated with both the political and fantasmatic logics, as stories of political power can shore up both types of claims. These political power stories motivate constituents through the idea that a political community will exercise power through institutions and policies that give power to each member, though generally through alleged virtual or actual representation (Smith 2003, 62). The potential

for power in society as well as in political structures can create a sense of great worth for the constituents, and motivate support for the leaders who advocate these stories. All groups engaged in a struggle for power wish to create a coalition large enough to seize and maintain power, while limiting the size of the group to ensure a maximum political and economic payoff for their constituents (Christia 2012, 6).

Of the three types of narratives, the ethically constitutive story is the most relevant for the idea of operational culture. The ethically constitutive narrative provides a story that belonging to a particular people is intrinsic to who its members really are, and affirms that "members' culture, religion, language, race, ethnicity, ancestry, history, or other such factors are constitutive of their very identities as persons, in ways that both affirm their worth and delineate their obligations" (Smith 2003, 64-65). Narratives of this type tend to be intergenerational, delineating the identities of a member's ancestors and future offspring, as well as gendered, in that part of the narrative restricts the reproductive agency of women as the keepers of pure identity (Smith 2003, 65).

These narratives in particular are important to intervention. Some of the basic tenets conflict with the liberal democratic values espoused in FM 3-24 and other nation-building doctrine, and membership in these groups is perceived as inherent and inflexible. Doctrine does not account for how these identities, particularly ethnic and religious identities, are malleable. If operational culture views these narratives as contestable, and their client groups as constructed rather than born, we will find instead areas for intervention within the group. Furthermore, history has shown there is "no such thing as an impossible alliance in the context of a multiparty civil war. . . . Nor is any group, however homogenous, safe from internal fractionalization" (Christia 2012, 4). These

identities are constructed and abandoned as needed, which bears particular relevance as we seek to intervene.

Ethically constitutive stories include three general elements: first, a religious or quasi-religious foundation for the claims that membership in the group is both intrinsic and morally worthwhile; second, a tendency to include "ethnic myths" of common descent to create a sense of shared kinship and common ancestry; and third, the inclusion of entrenched economic and social arrangements to reinforce ancestral claims while supporting patriarchal themes (Smith 2003, 66-67). These stories can generate social and marriage laws constructed around group status, gender identity, and power relationships-- all derived from the story of peoplehood.

The ethically constitutive story, then, is very much a fantasmatic object: it illustrates to the population, in terms of "us versus them" inevitability, why belonging to a specific group is preordained, and why the organization of society "must" be a certain way. Whether that destiny has been achieved or not, it provides a goal and envisioned end-state of society that must be attained in order for the constituents of the ethically constitutive story to prosper. Groups that mobilize their followers according to an ethically constitutive story are primed to establish a fantasmatic logic over their political order if they achieve power.

The ethically constitutive narrative is utilized along with economic and political power stories to create a broad base of support, generate trust and worth among the members of a people, and persuade the majority of constituents to believe the narrative while simultaneously supporting the interests of the group's elites. Blending these narratives creates a more compelling story because basic material and physical needs, a

sense of personal worth, and a desire for security are fundamental to human existence (Smith 2003, 70). Though building a coalition of support around a broadly popular narrative of shared peoplehood is the goal, the process of meaning-making and semiotics complicates the ease of designing and deploying these narratives while maintaining the goals of partisan elites.

It should also be noted that this ability to persuade through political and imaginative arguments is limited to a specific context, to a specific audience in a particular place and time, that cannot be easily transplanted to other contexts (Zerilli 2005). Judgment is necessary to evaluate and give meaning to the narratives and stories that create the basis for how we order the world. Spectators and constituents alike must use imagination and judgment to place these narratives within a useful context; without this judgment, these narratives and the actions based upon them have no meaning. Without meaning, the creation and deployment of narratives are not world-building activity and cease to be meaningful. Narratives and stories of peoplehood have meaning when they are developed and discussed, and become part of the contestation that gives rise to social institutions.

There is some danger for the student of operational culture in concentrating too much on the ethically constitutive story as being the primary motive for conflict. Much has been written about the role of ethnic, religious, and racial differences in creating and perpetuating armed conflict (Staniland 2012; Kalyvas and Kocher 2007; Kalyvas 2003; Franck and Rainer 2012), and it seems as though the U.S. defaults to the categorization of groups and persons involved in a conflict according to their linguistic or ethnic identity. As in Afghanistan, where Tajiks and Uzbeks were immediately correlated with the

Northern Alliance and thus anti-Taliban, this can create a superficial and dangerous view of the operational environment.

Christia (2012) discusses alliance formation in civil war, and addresses in different terms the means by which leaders in these conflicts blend stories of different motivation. This blending of stories creates a flexibility in alliance formation and fractionalization that bears out in the American experience in Afghanistan, as well as in conflicts around the globe. Ethnicity, race, religion, and other elements of the social logic mean very little in the context of surviving the greater conflict, and can be set aside through the use of convenient political power or ethically constitutive narratives in order to facilitate alliances with parties that would otherwise be excluded from the group's political logic. There is evidence the elites will pick allies based first on power considerations and then construct the narratives justifying the alliance, identifying characteristics or historical occurrences that are shared with their allies but not shared with others (Christia 2012, 6-7). We cannot direct our attention only to the outward manifestations of divided groups (their social logic), or their allies, but must understand the political power stories that underlie the political logic within a conflict to get to the root of who cooperates with whom and why.

Though elites manipulate the identity aspects of these narratives, to include the ethically constitutive stories, there is evidence that the identity attributes have some emotional impact on the rank and file--thus, identity factors do not drive alliance choices, but are useful to justify choices and establish stories for public consumption (Christia 2012, 7). These narratives thus fulfill the role of fantasmatic logics, even without an established political logic, in the midst of ongoing conflict.

We discussed above the fantasmatic logic established by the Assad regime in order to maintain control over the diversity in Syria, which itself crumbled under the fissures of contestation within the political logic. This speaks, to some degree, to the speed with which these logics can be destroyed and the difficulty in re-establishing some semblance of order. It could be a moderate warning for would-be liberators to consider carefully the types of forces that will be unleashed if or when a fantasmatic logic is toppled. One could argue that Saddam Hussein's regime operated under a fantasmatic logic similar to Assad's, and the U.S. removed that logic while simultaneously eliminating the political logic that limited contestation. Looking at the conflict consuming Syria, we must consider the types of ethically constitutive narratives currently proposed by the various rebel groups. By addressing these stories now, we may get a flavor for the types of political logic, and inevitable fantasmatic logics, which will likely result from any of these groups gaining significant power.

Semiotics, Language, and Meaning

As we consider the creation and maintenance of ethically constitutive stories and the fantasmatic logic, one must ask how it is possible to sell these types of deceptions to an entire people. We may assume rationality and a sense of agency among people that might otherwise preclude them from accepting a large-scale hoax such as supported the Assad regime. A few building block theories are available to illuminate some of these processes, particularly as we consider the role of political language, meaning making, and expressions of creed and faith.

Aspects of these theories are reflected superficially in the social logic, and may appear to be more relevant to that level of analysis, however these building blocks truly

create and sustain the stories that enable political and fantasmatic logics. Without these component theories, we as outsiders may be unable to identify what narratives are present, or to understand the semiotics of those narratives in supporting certain political and fantasmatic logics.

Zerilli (2005) discusses the concept that the practice of politics and political judgment is to convince through persuasion, rather than irrefutable proof, and creating this dialogue creates a public space for ideas and discussion. This public space is vital for a variety of reasons, not least of which is that the judgment that creates the public space creates relationships within that space and creates as well a public rather than a private persona for those doing the judging. In making judgments and attempting to persuade others within the public space, we reveal aspects of our private self and our mentality, enlarged or not. The political and social judgments of actors within the public sphere will provide us with greater insight into their motivations and interests, as well as their potential to advance stories of peoplehood.

Too often the U.S. overlooks the public pronouncements and debates internal to rebel groups as unworthy of scrutiny, privileging instead the dialogue of elected officials and government spokesmen. These lower-level discussions in fact provide us with early insight into potential future adversaries and allies. As these political judgments are being debated and put forth, they remain malleable and potentially open to intervention. Creating dialogue is easier early in the discourse of a group, rather than waiting until ethically constitutive and political power narratives have been deployed with central tenets of avoiding cooperation with the U.S. or outright conflict with U.S. interests.

This knowledge is immensely useful in understanding those with whom we quarrel and agree, as it is in our points of dissention that we learn more about what motivates and impassions people--we can get to the heart of what they value, what forms the basis of their personal and private narratives, and how meaning is made in their worldview. It is also worth noting the type of public persona that is created by U.S. leaders through their use of the public space and political judgment, using our enlarged mentality to attempt understanding how others will judge and interpret these public personas.

As we attempt to understand the political pronouncements in a society that is not ours, and whose language we likely do not speak, it is necessary to understand the relationship between political language and political reality. The flexibility of language plays a role not only in creating a political reality but in creating narratives, strengthening the political logic, and developing the fantasmatic logic.

A central issue with political discourse, and the expression of narratives and stories of peoplehood, is the disconnect between political language and political reality. Language, as the key component and creator of social worlds, cannot be relied upon as a tool to describe an objective reality. Edelman argues "dictionaries cannot tell us what language means; only the social situation and the concerns of human beings who think and act define meanings" (1985, 10).

A conversation about political language and the ways in which words can be used is distinctly lacking in the dialogue of operational culture. Political language is about the construction of beliefs within a constituency, and evoking meaning in order to legitimize some actions while condemning the alternatives--all aimed at persuading others to take

the speaker's side. Political language contributes in a significant way to the creation and support of narratives and stories of peoplehood, as well as the political and fantasmatic logics that underlie a society. As we consider the challenges of constructing a sense of peoplehood and understanding the subordinate culture, we must acknowledge the fluidity of meaning inherent in political language.

In addition to the flexibility in the language itself, Edelman (1985) observes that the material situation in which a person lives makes that person sensitive to some political language but not others, largely because the material situation defines what that person's "reality" is. What is important is not necessarily the material circumstances themselves, but rather the effect they can have on the understanding of political dialogue and construction of personal and public narratives. This sensitivity to some political language may also predispose parts of the constituency to hear economic stories or political power stories more strongly than others, and identify with groups that weight concern towards those ends.

Most important, from Edelman's (1985) view, is that political language constructs the political reality, rather than reflecting a reality that generates political language. Politicians choose from a set of stock texts when using political language, and these texts make sense within a socially-determined set of parameters. Stock texts are largely derived from the stories of peoplehood that support the political and fantasmatic logics currently at play within the society, utilizing the heroes and villains that are articulated in these narratives. These stock texts are effective in maintaining political support not because they are "true" in any empirical way--truth being an impossibility in political reasoning--but because these stock arguments are accurate in reflecting the hopes and

fears of the population, in defining their enemies (Edelman 1985). The potency of this political language derives from reflecting these fears, and also from reconstructing an interpretation of the past while evoking the hope of the future.

If political language derives from a set of stock texts, further derived from the stories of peoplehood or fantasmatic logics at play in a society, then we must consider as well the creation of meaning in that language. Practices of meaning-making will shed light on the stories at work in society, as well as whether a fantasmatic logic is at work. These semiotic practices refer to meaning-making in which agents' practices interact with their language and symbolic systems (Wedeen 2002, 713), and describes how these symbols in turn create meaning and observable political effects. Understanding how symbols and their meanings can spur action within a society is of great utility to outsiders seeking to create change. Unleashing the "right" symbol, or destroying the meaning in another, can eliminate the inertia of social practices and spur instead the vector of political practices.

Semiotics is a way of conceptualizing the world that "requires an account of how symbols operate in practice, why meanings generate action, and why actions produce meanings, when they do" (Wedeen 2002, 720). The interaction between symbols and action in foreign cultures is often opaque to Americans, as evidenced by difficulties experienced in both Iraq and Afghanistan with everything from mishandling the Qur'an to failing to identify black flags as signs of Shi'a devotion. The practices and their meanings thus always play a dual role, much like Arendt's concept of political dialogue: the outside spectator observes a meaning, while the actor understands their own actions in a different context (Zerilli 2005; Wedeen 2002, 720).

The utility here for operational culture is that semiotics do not require the planner or operator to focus on an inner essence of a culture, nor list the characteristics and traits of a given country in an attempt to understand the role narratives and meaning play. Starting with meaning-making practices that illuminate "how people attempt to make apparent, observable sense of their world--to themselves and others--in emotional and cognitive terms," operational culture is better served by identifying the semiotic practices relevant to a given operation and exploring how those practices work, than attempting to create a human terrain map of an entire country (Wedeen 2002, 721-722).

All of these signs are open to interpretation within a system of signification, much as political language is contestable. Furthermore, culture does not have to be static or primordial to play a role in creating social order. Wedeen argues that the "fissures, tensions, and instabilities" in semiotics and meaning-making produce a fragile social order (Wedeen 2002, 724), reflected in the political logic identified above. Healthy contestation can challenge the political logic while reflecting the social logic, and create meaningful political dialogue.

The symbols supporting a political regime may be absurd and widely understood to be superficial but can still serve their purpose in establishing and maintaining social order (Wedeen 1998; Wedeen 2002); discussions of the Assad regime reveal how symbolic practices, such as hanging pictures of the president in every home and business, reinforced the regime's political power even as citizens privately acknowledged the ridiculousness of doing so. The power of semiotics should not be disregarded in operational culture, as it can serve an important role in establishing a political and even ethically constitutive narrative to maintain order and enforce compliance.

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Finally, and perhaps most importantly for operational culture, concentrating on semiotic practices within a society creates explanations for how political groups are formed, particularly in concert with different stories of peoplehood, as well as how groups are solidified and maintained. Semiotics can also account for how alternative narratives and "possibilities of belonging" were dismissed (Wedeen 2002, 726), which can provide valuable insight into how and why a society chose its political logic, its narrative, and its system of signification.

The semiotics in a society is often reflective of overarching or popular creeds, as these creeds contribute to both the story of peoplehood and the stock texts available to elites within that society. A creed supplies the critical components of an individual's belief structure. Our sensibility as we live in the world and interact with others is the manifestation of our creed in a public context. The relevance for our understanding of operational culture is the formation of what Connelly terms "existential faith," or the combination of creed and a distinctive sensibility (Chambers and Carver 2008). The importance of this existential faith is twofold: first, that this faith can be engaged intellectually at some levels and not at all at others; and second, that this existential faith informs political thinking and theory, from micropolitics in an individual's life to the macropolitics of an entire state.

As a combination of creed and sensibility, existential faith contains a spectrum of beliefs and values, some of which can be challenged and contested without causing a significant fissure in the internal consistency of the existential faith. Other elements of that faith remain immune to external efforts at change or adaption. All of these, however, feed each other in a meaningful way. Attempting to define a person's creed will not

provide great insight into his existential faith or how he manifests his creed in daily behavior. Many Americans adhere to a creed based on the Judeo-Christian ethic, but do not always represent all aspects of that creed in their daily interactions with others. If we were to plan a negotiation with an American based only on his stated creed, and not on how he interprets that creed into a sensibility and existential faith, we would miss vital information on how to approach and deal with that American. Only by considering these three elements in context with each other can we begin to understand how the professed creeds of a society are related to the political, social, and fantasmatic logics at work in that society.

An existential faith is not merely a measured, considered application of philosophy to world events, but rather "is a hot, committed view of the world layered into the affective dispositions, habits and institutional priorities of its confessors. The intensity of commitment to it typically exceeds the power of the arguments and evidence advanced" (Connolly 2004, 333). Well beyond the doctrinal laws of a creed or the practiced banality of a sensibility, the existential faith combines these into a passionate defense of an individual's worldview that is at work in every aspect of his life.

Existential faith can be shaped or adjusted, but is seldom abandoned wholesale. Rather, proponents of an existential faith use "coping methods" to maintain commitment to the existential faith while integrating new, potentially contentious information. Redefining core terms or "clarifying" uniting ideas are useful strategies for maintaining the label of an existential faith while adapting the internal values and beliefs. Thus an existential faith can be maintained even in the face of evidence marshaled against its basic tenets.

In considering existential faith in this manner, we can see how existential faith can reinforce an ethically constitutive narrative or provide the bedrock for fantasmatic logics. Deconstructing an ethically constitutive narrative or fantasmatic logic may become easier if the analyst can first articulate the existential faiths in competition in society. Understanding the contradictions or potential conflicts present in existential faith across a society can also provide insight into what narratives would be useful within that society, as existential faith is not immune to new concepts and interpretations. Existential faith addresses the influence of religion and many other social forces in a culture, and forms the final building block within the framework.

A Framework for Operational Culture

What does this framework really mean for us? In short, it provides flexibility in understanding and action. The U.S. process usually involves identifying an end-state--often liberal democracy with human rights all around--and then developing lines of effort that will notionally get us from point A to point B. Rarely do the end-state or the lines of effort have input from what is achievable, given the state of affairs on the ground and cultural reality. Rather than picking a goal for Iraq, Afghanistan, or Syria that plays well in the American media, we should identify relevant, desirable, but still achievable end-states that reflect the values, narratives, and realities of the society in which we propose to intervene. To do so, we can start at either end of the chain--with the building blocks or with the logics. These can be used to understand the situation on the ground in light of our end-state, or to understand the relevance and possibility of our end-state related to what we see in the environment.

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Intervention, in terms of any of the instruments of power, can happen based on the building blocks in the framework. We can address the semiotics of a society in order to change the meaning of commonly held or corrupted symbols, through the thoughtful application of Military Information Support Operations (MISO) and other information operations. We can also gauge the effectiveness of political language, both of American pronouncements as well as those of opposition politicians. The speech of our adversaries and allies can provide rich fodder for further information operations, or the creation of dialogue.

Understanding the stock texts that are available to a politician in a given society will aid American leaders, whether diplomatic or military, in crafting statements that are familiar to those available to other political leaders, but using the correct semiotics to make sure the American message is present and palatable. Finally, we must take care to separate the creed and sensibility from the conversation, as creed and sensibility dominate tactical culture. We should be more interested in the existential faith that underlies who accepts what narratives, why they do so, and how this applies to the political and fantasmatic logic at work in a society.

What are the stories that hold a society together, and what does this mean for us? The political logic shows us the points of contestation, where the power is concentrated, and begins to demonstrate the narrative that the regime uses to hold everything together and justify the status quo through a fantasmatic logic. By understanding the social logic and how the society understands itself, we can look for those areas where the fantasmatic logic fails to hold, or why the population views the political logic as legitimate.

Operational culture must address the development and use of narratives,

particularly the ethically constitutive narrative, in building peoplehood, as well as the

relationship between meaning and practice. By examining the meaning and interaction of

narrative, semiotics, and political language, we can begin to understand how the

fantasmatic logic that holds a society together (or has failed to do so) is constructed. The

fissures that exist within a society, beneath the fantasmatic logic, afford us an opportunity

to intervene to foment disorder or attempt to create stability.

The specific traits and artifacts of a given society are not particularly useful in

designing an operational approach or otherwise attempting to build lasting institutions. It

is the relationship between these things, and the symbolic meaning of the artifacts, that

inspire people to action. It is only through understanding these outward expressions of

culture that we can hope to identify places to intervene within a conflict and cause

meaningful change, rather than sowing chaos.

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[1]See the military Intelligence Preparation of the Battlespace (IPB) in FM 3-24, and FM 5-0, *The Operations Process*, for acronyms and methods designed to aid the average planner in categorizing culture and other social variables. Operational variables (PMESII-PT): political, military, economic, social, information, infrastructure, physical environment, and time. Mission variables (METT-TC): mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and support available, time available, and civil considerations. Also civil considerations (ASCOPE): areas, structures, capabilities, organizations, people, events. These acronyms are fit into matrices, along with the information derived from their parts, and filled out as a way of informing the staff of some relevant information, although it may not be immediately (or ever) clear what is relevant.

CHAPTER 5

THE WAY AHEAD

> All the people like us are We,
> And everyone else is They.
>
> — Rudyard Kipling

> you better always ask the end-game questions. Where is this going and where is it
> likely to end, and how is it likely to end. . . . You've got to play this thing out a
> little bit in your own mind. It is imperfect, it is imprecise.
> — Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel
> Testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee, 17 April 2013

Culture plays a role in American planning for intervention in other countries, at all levels of war. Whether this role is as window-dressing and political correctness in dealing with host nation counterparts, or as a legitimate part of the discussion regarding courses of action and outcomes, remains contested. Culture as it exists in FM 3-24 helps us identify and describe the "They" in Kipling's poem, but cannot help us determine how "We" can and should understand "They" when influencing their environment.

I have put forth an argument for the utility of cultural concepts, such as the political logic and story of peoplehood, in evaluating the desirability and possibility of both political and military end-states. I seek to address the problem faced by the U.S. military and intelligence communities, in their roles as advisors to civilian leadership but also within their action-based missions, rather than contributing to the evaluation of puzzles and theories. The many capabilities of the U.S. military and intelligence communities can be adapted to address any of the potential strategic junctures and opportunities for intervention they provide, as identified in the framework, at all levels of war and with the full spectrum of options for response, regardless of the problem to

which it is applied. The analytical tools here also empower these communities to engage the whole of government in planning for intervention, and through the framework raise questions that can be answered not only by the Departments of State, Justice, Agriculture, or Commerce, but also the academic community and non-governmental agencies. The processes and issues raised within the framework encourage seeking knowledge outside the traditional spheres of military intelligence and intelligence analysis, but require an enlarged mentality to consider input from a vast array of sources. The flexibility of the framework is one of its greatest strengths.

Each of these analytic tools--the logics, narratives, and building blocks--can be adapted to the unique situations that may require intervention, to include conflicts emerging at the time of this writing. The question of Syria, and whether and how the U.S. should intervene on behalf of the rebels, remains under contention with the U.S. government and the international community. Though it is simple to compare the forces at work in Syria to the chaos that erupted in Iraq after the removal of the Ba'ath Party and its political logic from society, in reality these cognitive heuristics are untenable and may preclude the U.S. from intervening where intervention is due.

It is worth considering to what extent the U.S. military and intelligence communities have considered the narratives and logics of the various Syrian rebel groups that receive economic, humanitarian, and now military aid from the U.S. Addressing these narratives and stories now may provide the U.S. with the opportunity to influence potential future allies, or at least identify potential future adversaries, while these groups are still in the nascent stage. The political logic at work during the conflict will help us define what groups resist the current logic, and where these groups resist each other.

Much could be learned from applying this framework to the ongoing civil war in Syria, with particular attention paid to the rebel groups and the alliances they have formed and fractured in the past two years of conflict. Perhaps by evaluating these rebel groups through this framework, the U.S. can identify viable partners for conflict resolution and groups who may represent an undesirable future for Syria and the region.

It is also worth considering the degree to which regional and global relationships can be evaluated through this framework. Continuing with Syria, the role of Russia and other global powers plays a significant part in constraining the options available to the U.S. and the international community for intervention. The roles of Hezbollah and Iran, and the growing tension between Lebanon and Syria over refugees, all factor into how this conflict may escalate or implode. Evaluating Syria's narratives and logic in the context of the Levant, the wider Middle East, and her international alliances and obligations, could provide global strategic options for intervention for the U.S. If engaging with members of the Arab League, for example, could influence the outcome of the Syrian civil war prior to the need for American boots on the ground, then that possibility should be raised to American policymakers and military leadership. We cannot know the areas of contestation and potential for intervention unless we look for them.

Avenues for further research include the application of the framework to specific conflicts or during real-world planning events, to gauge the utility and effectiveness of these analytic tools. Use of the framework during ongoing problems and emergent situations may also provide feedback as to the selected courses of action or evaluate individual lines of effort. It is worth noting the framework should not be used piecemeal,

but rather as part of the overall design, however at the operational level it will remain useful for evaluating a smaller part of an overall strategic plan. Future research could also include assessments of newer social science theories related to conflict initiation and termination that may shed additional light on these processes. A great deal of work is being done to understand the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and will likely continue to produce interesting scholarship for years to come. Incorporating some of the theories that will likely develop from this scholarship will certainly benefit this framework and the study of operational culture.

Outside of this framework itself, the theories and ideas introduced therein should be considered a starting point for a greater focus on political theory and the social sciences throughout the military and intelligence communities. Informing policymakers and civilian leaders of potential consequences and outcomes of the exercise of U.S. power, regardless of whether that is diplomatic, military, or economic, requires cutting edge scholarship and the willingness to challenge the accepted ways of doing business. It is incumbent upon the military and intelligence communities to seek out knowledge that will give our recommendations more clarity or prescience than they would have otherwise had. To that end, it would be worthwhile to consider a greater focus on political theory and social sciences in Army professional military education, in analytical training courses, and other intelligence training. Part of this conversation should also include other inter-agency partners and the whole of government, in order to better leverage the experience and knowledge of our partner agencies and Departments. The U.S. Agency for International Development (US AID) has a wealth of experience on the ground in the majority of countries in the world and can provide valuable insight into not

only the specific societies in which we might intervene, but also the larger regional, economic, and even environmental impact of potential intervention.

Connolly (2004, 344) notes that intervention is a sophistical process of escalating levels of involvement, beginning with explanation, increasing to participation, and culminating in evaluation. Our efforts to understand our adversaries to date have largely ceased with explanation, often framed within the American or Western worldview, without much interest paid to the role culture plays in participation and evaluation. The results have played out in a series of interventions overseas, with varying degrees of success. As the quotes from Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel have articulated, the U.S. needs to identify and anticipate the end-state prior to becoming involved in a crisis. Once the U.S. is involved, there is little support for backing out when change does not progress as we would like.

It is unlikely that the conflicts the U.S. military and intelligence communities will face in future will be simple, conventional clashes. Rather, globalization and horizontal and vertical integration of the world add layers of complexity and competing alliances and identities that will continue to muddy the operational environment. Second-, third- and fourth-order effects will result from even minor interventions in the increasingly complex system of the international environment, from all branches of government and with all instruments of national power. Trade relations and commercial business decisions could affect the internal dynamics of a failing state, sparking conflict or creating stability more effectively than an armed intervention might. The U.S. military must recognize the competitive influences within these complex systems and

acknowledge that seldom can a line of effort or course of action be imagined within a vacuum and without the influence of a myriad of outside, uncontrolled actors.

The objective assessment of end-states and courses of action should be conducted in light of the culture and social dynamics of the society in which we are intervening, rather than concentrating on the ideals and subjective standards of the American point of view. Addressing the plausibility of our attempts to support "good governance" in Afghanistan or Iraq, particularly considering the relevance of governance to the stories of peoplehood popular in these countries, could have provided alternate solutions and processes early in these wars that might have changed the course of the insurgencies and larger conflicts.

Though consideration of culture and the preferences of a host society should be included in the initial stages of planning for intervention, ultimately the impact on the U.S. military, government, and population should play the primary role in determining the appropriateness of a course of action or end-state. The feasibility of success in an intervention should be based on U.S. national interests and the potential for deleterious consequences for the American people and power in the world. Culture then is not to be applied through this framework in an effort to coddle adversaries or minimize otherwise justified U.S. intervention, but can and should be applied in order to protect and defend the interests, rights, and capabilities of the U.S.

In situations where the need for intervention is not directly tied to U.S. national interest, and is instead perhaps motivated by altruism or international political pressure, this framework and the application of culture to intervention can be useful for minimizing the potential cost to the U.S. as well as coalition and allied partners. Though this strategic

calculation may only confirm the accusations of anthropologists regarding the

"weaponization of culture," ultimately the concern of the U.S. military and intelligence

communities is the United States. Considering the cause-and-effect of military and

intelligence intervention overseas is vital for American planners and leaders.

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